Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (SPRAB)

July 23, 2025

Dear Mayor Hoy, City Councilors, and Interim City Manager Namburi:

Over the past year, the Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board convened three research committees to explore innovative policy opportunities that support the City's Climate Action Plan and help achieve its greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals.

The Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board provides recommendations and guidance to the City regarding our park and recreation lands, facilities, and programs. Comprising of eight City Council-appointed volunteers, the Board offers these strategic recommendations in direct support of advancing climate action while enhancing the City's 90+ parks and 2,500 acres of natural and recreational space.

In October 2020, Salem adopted the following GHG emission reduction targets:

- 50% reduction in citywide emissions from 2016 levels by 2035
- Carbon neutrality by 2050

Then, in 2021-2022, Salem's Climate Action Plan was developed to help achieve these goals. Building upon this work, our research committees focused on three key areas related to operations and development of the Salem park system – though also applicable throughout city departments -- that could help shape future policies and practices that advance the City's climate-action work and related objectives: Electric Equipment Use, Climate-Friendly Transportation, and Low-Carbon Materials in Capital Projects. Each committee presented its findings and initial recommendations to the Board over several meetings in 2025.

After reviewing the committee findings, the Board developed the following recommendations and encourages City Council and staff to implement them as opportunities and resources allow. We believe that doing so will help our city achieve its greenhouse gas reduction goals and prepare our community for a climate-smart future.

Recommended Policy and Practice Areas:

- **Low-Carbon Materials in Capital Projects**
    - Evaluate embodied carbon: As part of project scoping and procurement, assess the embodied greenhouse gas emissions of materials used in capital improvement projects—particularly concrete. Materials and construction techniques with lower carbon footprints should be prioritized wherever feasible. (Related to CAP Strategy MW05)
    - Monitor advances in cement and concrete technologies: Emerging technologies, including carbon-injected cement and carbon capture and sequestration solutions at cement plants, have the potential to significantly reduce emissions

from one of the highest-emitting construction materials. (Related to CAP Strategy MW05)

- Support the use of nature-based carbon sequestration strategies: Recognize the dual role of the urban tree canopy and natural landscapes as carbon sinks. Unlike "carbon capture" technologies, carbon sequestration through ecosystems like forests, green spaces, and healthy soils offers a natural, long-term solution for offsetting emissions. City capital projects and site development should seek to preserve, restore, and expand tree canopy and vegetative cover wherever possible as part of integrated climate resilience planning. (Related to CAP Strategy FD08)

- **Electric Equipment Use**
  - Procure battery-electric tools for replacements when a suitable battery-electric tool is identified with equivalent (or improved) operational capacity and within cost premiums. Prioritize battery-electric tool procurement over gas equipment. (Related to CAP Strategy EN37)
- **Climate-Friendly Transportation**
  - Incorporate EV-ready wiring and charging stations as a default for parking lots in Parks and throughout the city. Establish a policy for EV-specific parking spot allocations in future parking lot developments. Algin EV charging installation with park improvement projects. (Tangentially related to CAP Strategy TL26)
  - Encourage the use of alternative transportation methods to access parks – walking, biking, bussing – through the development of communication and outreach materials. Consider partnering with Cherriots and local businesses to highlight the interconnectedness of Parks and small businesses.
  - Prioritize bike access in future park and city development plan updates. Prioritize bike access and parking in initial phases of park planning and development. Consider revising current policies on ratio of bike to vehicle parking.
  - Continue efforts to liaise with Cherriots on their ongoing micromobility study. (Related to CAP Strategy TL09)

Finally, we underscore the vital role that Salem's parks, natural areas, and tree canopy play in building urban climate resilience, supporting public health, and improving quality of life—benefits that will only grow more critical in the face of climate change.
Thank you for considering these recommendations. If you have specific questions or would like to see us further develop policy or guidance on any of these items, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Keith Norris
Chair, Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board